

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 /078 W

-----111230Z 003875 /11

R 110923Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4748

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 0508

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, LY, RP

SUBJECT: MINDANAO PEACE SETTLEMENT

REF: MANILA 365

1. SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO INFORMED ACCOUNT OF TRIPOLI NEGOTIATIONS, LIBYAN SIDE ACCEPTED GOP INSISTENCE ON PLEBISCITE TO DETERMINE PROVINCES THAT WILL BE INCLUDED IN PROPOSED AUTONOMOUS REGION, EVEN THOUGH PLEBISCITE NEVER SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN SIXTEEN POINT AGREEMENT. ASSUMING THAT MARCOS CAN HANDLE CHRISTIAN BACKLASH AND THAT AGREEMENT DOES NOT FALL APART IN NEXT ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS, IT APPEARS THAT HE WILL ARRANGE TO HAVE PLEBISCITE ENDORSE TEN PROVINCES OF EXISTING REGIONS IX AND XII AS "AUTONOMOUS REGION". SINCE GOP CLAIMS THAT THEY HAVE BEEN AUTONOMOUS SINCE 1975, THIS COULD BE PORTRAYED TO DOUBTING CHRISTIANS AS NO MORE THAN ENDORSEMENT OF STATUS QUO. WHETHER IT WOULD SATISFY MUSLIMS REMAINS TO BE SEEN, OF COURSE. MEANWHILE MNLF/ ISLAMIC CONFERENCE CEASEFIRE SUPERVISION TEAM HAS NOT
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YET ARRIVED IN MANILA AND LATEST INFORMATION INDICATES THAT CEASEFIRE STILL BEING VIOLATED. CONSIDERING PROBLEMS INVOLVED WE REMAIN CONFIDENT THAT THERE WILL BE NO RAPID OR COMPLETE END TO HOSTILITIES IN MINDANAO. WE HAVE HEARD FROM TWO SOURCES THAT MRS. MARCOS WILL PARTICIPATE IN NEXT ROUND OF TRIPOLI NEGOTIATIONS BEING FEB. 5. END SUMMARY.

2. WHAT PURPORTS TO BE INSIDE STORY OF TRIPOLI NEGOTIATIONS PUBLISHED IN MANILA PRESS JAN. 9 MAY EXPLAIN APPARENT DISCREPANCY BETWEEN SIXTEEN POINT AGREEMENT SIGNED TRIPOLI (DISCUSSED REFTEL), WHICH MAKES NO MENTION OF PLEBISCITE, AND MARCOS PUBLIC STATEMENTS, WHICH EMPHASIZE PLEBISCITE AS RECONDITION FOR INCLUSION OF PROVINCES IN PROPOSED "AUTONOMOUS" REGION.

3. ARTICLE BY "DAILY EXPRESS" CORRESPONDENT ALEX ALLAN (WHO WAS PRESENT IN TRIPOLI) SAYS TALKS WERE ON VERGE OF BREAKDOWN ON DEC. 20 OVER QUESTION OF AREA TO BE INCLUDED IN AUTONOMOUS REGION. GOP PANEL INSISTED IT COULD NOT GO BEYOND TEN PROVINCES CURRENTLY INCLUDED IN REGIONS IX AND XII. HOWEVER MNLF INSISTED ON ALL OF MINDANAO-SULU-PALAWAN.

4. FINALLY QADHAFI TOLD MARCOS BY PHONE THAT IMPASSE COULD BE BROKEN IF GOP WOULD ACCEPT THREE PROVINCES IN ADDITION TO ORIGINAL TEN--DAVAO DEL SUR, SOUTH COTABATO AND PALAWAN. ON DEC. 22 MARCOS AGREED, PROVIDED THAT THIS SUBJECT TO PHILIPPINE "CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES". ACCORDING STORY, BARBERO HAD ALREADY EXPLAINED TO QADHAFI THAT "CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS" MEANT SECURING PEOPLES' APPROVAL VIA "REFERENDUM".

5. ACCORDING STORY, MARCOS' STIPULATION WAS THEN EMBODIED IN ARTICLE 13 OF AGREEMENT. (TEXT OF AGREEMENT STILL NOT RELEASED IN MANILA AND NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT CONFIDENTIAL

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DOES NOT QUOTE ARTICLE 13, WHICH ACCORDING VERSION OBTAINED BY EMBASSY READS, "THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES SHALL TAKE ALL NECESSARY CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES (SIC) FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENTIRE AGREEMENT." PREAMBLE OF AGREEMENT NAMES THIRTEEN PROVINCES TO BE INCLUDED IN REGION. AS NOTED REFTEL THERE IS NO SPECIFIC MENTION OF PLEBISCITE.)

6. BOTH BARBERO AND AMBASSADOR CASTRO (ALSO MEMBER OF GOP PANEL IN TRIPOLI) HAVE ASSURED EMBOFFS THAT ALLAN ACCOUNT IS ESSENTIALLY ACCURATE. BOTH INSIST THAT LIBYANS AND MNLF ACCEPTED GOP STIPULATION OF PLEBISCITE. CASTRO INDICATED THAT POSSIBLE GOP GAME PLAN WILL BE TO WORK FOR "YES" VOTE IN TEN PROVINCES OF EXISTING REGIONS IX AND XII, LEAVING THREE LIBYAN PROPOSED ADDITIONS WHICH ARE HEAVILY NON-MUSLIM TO VOTE "NO" AND FALL BY WAYSIDE. (ALTHOUGH ONLY FIVE OF TEN PROVINCES IN REGIONS IX-XII HAVE MUSLIM MAJORITIES, MARCOS WILL PRESUMABLY BE ABLE TO SWAY DOUBTING CHRISTIAN VOTERS THERE

WITH ARGUMENT THAT THEY ARE MERELY ENDORSING STATUS QUO,
SINCE REGIONS IX-XII HAVE IN THEORY BEEN "AUTONO-
MOUS" SINCE JULY 1975.)

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7. AMBASSADOR CASTRO REFERRED FREQUENTLY TO AGREEMENT,
COMMENTING THAT ITS EXISTENCE IS "NO SECRET" BUT THAT
IT IS NOT BEING PUBLISHED FOR TIME BEING TO AVOID
CRITICISM BY HORDES OF UNEMPLOYED FILIPINO CONSTITUTIONAL
LAWYERS. (DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENT ARE CIRCULATING WIDELY AMONG
FOREIGN PRESS IN MANILA.) REGARDING CEASEFIRE, HE
SAID GOP PANEL HAD WANTED IT TO COME IN FORCE ON
DEC. 24 (AND GOVERNMENT OBSERVED IT AS OF THAT DATE)
BUT MUSLIMS SAID THEY NEEDED UNTIL JAN. 20 TO GET WORD
TO FORCES IN "LIBERATED AREAS". (RESULT WAS AMBIGUOUS
LANGUAGE IN ARTICLE 12 OF AGREEMENT.) CASTRO SAID
HE DID NOT KNOW WHEN MNLF/ISLAMIC COMMITTEE TRUCE
SUPERVISORS WOULD ARRIVE ALTHOUGH PRESUMABLY THEY WILL BE
HERE SHORTLY. (LATEST INFORMATION INDICATES THAT SEASEFIRE IS
NOT YET HOLDING AND THAT MILITARY ARE EXPRESSING STRONG DOUBTS
ABOUT AGREEMENT.)

8. BARBERO TOLD POLCOUNS JAN. 7 THAT MRS. MARCOS WOULD
HEAD GOP PANEL AT NEXT ROUND OF TRIPOLI NEGOTIATIONS
BEGINNING FEB. 5. CASTRO'S VERSION IS THAT SHE WILL
NOT BE OFFICIAL MEMBER OF PANEL BUT MAY PAY SIMULTANEOUS
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SECOND VISIT TO LIBYA WHILE TALKS UNDERWAY.

9. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH WE NOW KNOW THAT GAP BETWEEN AGREEMENT AND GOP PUBLIC STATEMENTS IS NOT AS WIDE AS IT ORIGINALLY APPEARED, MARCOS STILL FACES SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE IN OBTAINING ACCEPTANCE OF AGREEMENT BY BOTH MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS (ASSUMING IT SURVIVES NEXT ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS). NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS WE DO NOT EXPECT TO SEE RAPID OR COMPLETE END TO HOSTILITIES IN MINDANAO.
SULLIVAN

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